

THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
JOHN GILPIN,

How he went farther than he intended, and  
came Home safe at last.



L O N D O N

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(Price Three-pence.)



T H E  
H I S T O R Y  
O F  
J O H N G I L P I N.

TO THE TUNE OF 'CHEVY CHACE'.

**J**OHN GILPIN was a citizen  
Of credit and renown ;  
A train-band captain eke was he  
Of famous London town.

John Gilpin's spouse said to her dear—

- ' Though wedded we have been
- ' These twice ten tedious years, yet we
- ' No holiday have seen.
- ' To-morrow is our wedding-day,
- ' And we will then repair
- ' Unto the Bell at Edmonton,
- ' All in a chaise and pair.
- ' My sister and my sister's child,
- ' Myself and children three,
- ' Will fill the chaise ; so you must ride
- ' On horseback after we.'

He soon reply'd—' I do admire

' Of womankind but one ;

' And you are she, my dearest dear,

' Therefore it shall be done.

' I am a linen-draper bold,

' As all the world does know ;

' And my good friend, the callender,

' Will lend his horse to go.'

Quoth Mrs. Gilpin—' That's well said ;

' And, for that wine is dear,

' We will be furnish'd with our own,

' Which is so bright and clear.'

John Gilpin kiss'd his loving wife ;

O'erjoy'd was he to find,

That though on pleasure she was bent,

She had a frugal mind.

The morning came, the chaise was brought,

But yet was not allow'd

To drive up to the door, lest all

Should say that she was proud.

So three doors off the chaise was staid,  
 Where they did all get in,  
 Six precious souls ; and all agog  
 To dash through thick and thin.

Smack went the whip, round went the wheels,  
 Were never folks so glad ;  
 The stones did rattle underneath,  
 As if Cheapside were mad.

John Gilpin, at his horse's side,  
 Seiz'd fast the flowing mane,  
 And up he got in haste to ride,  
 But soon came down again.

For saddle-tree scarce reach'd had he,  
 His journey to begin,  
 When, turning round his face, he saw  
 Three customers come in.

So down he came ; for loss of time,  
 Although it griev'd him sore,  
 Yet loss of pence, full well he knew,  
 Would grieve him still much more.

'Twas long before the customers  
 Were suited to their mind,  
 When Betty scream'd into his ears—  
 ' The wine is left behind !'

' Good lack !' quoth he ; ' yet bring it me,  
 ' My leathern belt likewise,  
 ' In which I bear my trusty sword  
 ' When I do exercise.'

Now Mrs. Gilpin—careful soul !—  
 Had two stone bottles found,  
 To hold the liquor which she lov'd,  
 And keep it safe and sound.

Each bottle had two curling ears,  
 Through which the belt he drew ;  
 He hung one bottle on each side,  
 To make his balance true.

Then over all, that he might be  
 Equipp'd from top to toe,  
 His long red cloak, well brush'd and neat,  
 He manfully did throw,

Now

Now see him mounted once again  
 Upon his nimble steed,  
 Full slowly pacing o'er the stones,  
 With caution and good heed.

But finding soon a smoother road  
 Beneath his well-shod feet,  
 The snorting beast began to trot,  
 Which gall'd him in his seat.

' So fair and softly,' John did cry,  
 But John he cry'd in vain;  
 That trot became a gallop soon  
 In spite of curb or rein.

So stooping down, as he needs must  
 Who cannot sit upright,  
 He grasp'd the mane with both his hands,  
 And eke with all his might

Away went Gilpin, neck or nought,  
 Away went hat and wig;  
 He little dreamt, when he set out,  
 Of running such a rig.



The horse, who never had before  
 Been handled in this kind,  
 Affrighted fled; and, as he flew,  
 Left all the world behind.

The wind did blow, the cloak did fly,  
 Like streamer long and gay;  
 Till loop and button failing both,  
 At last it flew away.

Then might all people well discern  
 The bottles he had slung;  
 A bottle swinging at each side,  
 As has been said or sung.

The dogs did bark, the children scream'd,  
 Up flew the windows all;  
 And ev'ry soul cry'd out, ' Well done !'  
 As loud as he could bawl.

Away went Gilpin—who but he!  
 His fame soon spread around—  
 ' He carries weight!—he rides a race!—  
 ' 'Tis for a thousand pound !'

And



And still, as fast as he drew near,  
 'Twas wonderful to view,  
 How, in a trice, the turnpike-men  
 Their gates wide open threw.

And now, as he went bowing down  
 His reeking head full low,  
 The bottles twain, behind his back,  
 Were shatter'd at a blow.

Down ran the wine into the road,  
 Most piteous to be seen,  
 And made his horse's flanks to smoke,  
 As he had basted been.

But still he seem'd to carry weight,  
 With leathern girdle brac'd;  
 For still the bottle necks were left  
 Both dangling at his waist.

Thus, all through merry Islington,  
 These gambols he did play,  
 And till he came unto the Wash  
 Of Edmonton so gay.

And

And

And there he threw the Wash about  
On both sides of the way ;  
Just like unto a trundling-mop,  
Or a wild-goose at play.

At Edmonton his loving wife  
From the balcony spied  
Her tender husband, wond'ring much  
To see how he did ride.

‘ Stop, stop, John Gilpin ! here’s the house !’  
They all at once did cry ;  
‘ The dinner waits, and we are tired !’—  
Said Gilpin—‘ So am I !’

But, ah ! his horse was not a whit  
Inclin’d to tarry there ;  
For why ?—his owner had a house  
Full ten miles off, at Ware.

So like an arrow swift he flew  
Shot by an archer strong ;  
So did he fly—which brings me to  
The middle of my song.

Away

Away went Gilpin, out of breath,  
And sore against his will,  
Till at his friend's, the callender's,  
His horse at last stood still.

The callender, surpriz'd to see  
His friend in such a trim,  
Laid down his pipe, flew to the gate,  
And thus accosted him—

‘ What news? what news?—the tidings tell;  
‘ Make haste and tell me all!  
‘ Say, why bare-headed you are come,  
‘ Or why you come at all?’

Now Gilpin had a pleasant wit,  
And lov'd a timely joke;  
And thus unto the callender,  
In merry strains he spoke—

‘ I came because your horse would come;  
‘ And, if I well forbode,  
‘ My hat and wig will soon be here;  
‘ They are upon the road.’

The callender, right glad to find  
 His friend in merry pin,  
 Return'd him not a single word,  
 But to the house went it :

Whence straight he came with hat and wig,  
 A wig that droop'd behind,  
 A hat not much the worse for wear :  
 Each comely in its kind.

He held them up ; and, in his turn  
 Thus shew'd his ready wit—

‘ My head is twice as big as yours,  
 ‘ They therefore needs must fit.

‘ But let me scrape the dirt away  
 ‘ That hangs about your face ;

‘ And stop and eat—for well you may  
 ‘ Be in a hungry case !’

Said John—‘ It is my wedding-day ;

‘ And folks would gape and stare,

‘ If wife should dine at Edmonton,

‘ And I should dine at Ware.’

Then

Then, speaking to his horse, he said,

‘ I am in haste to dine ;  
‘ ’Twas for your pleasure you came here,  
‘ You shall go back for mine.’

Ah ! luckless word and bootless boast,  
For which he paid full dear ;  
For, while he spoke, a braying ass  
Did sing most loud and clear :

Whereat his horse did snort, as if  
He heard a lion roar ;  
And gallop’d off, with all his might,  
As he had done before.

Away went Gilpin—and away  
Went Gilpin’s hat and wig ;  
He lost them sooner than at first :  
For why ?—they were too big.

Now Gilpin’s wife, when she had seen  
Her husband posting down  
Into the country far away,  
She pull’d out half-a-crown ;

Then

And

And thus unto the youth she said  
That drove them to the Bell,  
' This shall be yours, when you bring back  
' My husband safe and well,

The youth did ride, and soon they met;  
He try'd to stop John's horse  
By seizing fast the flowing rein,  
But only made things worse.

For, not performing what he meant,  
And gladly would have done,  
He thereby frightened Gilpin's horse,  
And made him faster run.

Away went Gilpin—and away  
Went post-boy at his heels;  
The post-boy's horse right glad to miss  
The lumber of the wheels.

Six gentlemen upon the road,  
Thus seeing Gilpin fly,  
[With post-boy scamp'ring in the rear,  
They rais'd the hue-and-cry.

‘ Sop thief!—stop thief!—a highwayman !

Not one of them was mute ;

So they, and all that pass’d that way,

Soon join’d in the pursuit.

But all the turnpike-gates again

Flew open in short space ;

The men still thinking, as before,

That Gilpin rode a race :

And so he did, and won it too,

For he got first to town :

Nor stopp’d till where he first got up

He did again get down.

Now let us sing—‘ Long live the king ;

‘ And Gilpin, long live he ;

And when he next does ride abroad,

‘ May I be there to see !’

F I N I S.



*This work was published in 1784.*

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